

Troopers Investigating a Fatal Pedestrian Crash North of Ellendale



Luis D. Rivera

Presented by Public Information Officer, Master Corporal Gary Fournier

Ellendale – The Delaware State Police Collision Reconstruction

Unit is investigating a fatal crash that claimed the life of an Ellendale man as he was walking along the road.

The incident occurred around 6:19 p.m. Tuesday February 21, 2017 as **Luis D. Rivera**, 44 of Ellendale, was operating a 1986 Ford F350 box truck northbound on North Old State Road, just north of Beach Hwy (SR16). Willie A. Purnell, 46 of Ellendale, who is intellectually disabled, left his nearby residence unsupervised and was walking on North Old State Road in an unknown direction. Rivera, who left the same residence a short time later to search for Willie Purnell, failed to see him in the roadway and struck him with the front left of his vehicle, projecting him into a grassy ditch on the west side of the roadway. The box truck came to a controlled stop just north of the impact area.

Willie Purnell, who was wearing dark colored clothing, was removed from the scene by EMS and transported to Bayhealth Milford Memorial Hospital (MMH) where he was pronounced dead.

Luis Rivera was uninjured in the collision, although he was transported to MMH after he was assaulted by a 29-year-old male from Ellendale, who is a relative of the pedestrian. Upon being released from the hospital, Rivera was charged with 6th Offense Driving Under the Influence of Alcohol (prior convictions: 07/14/93, 05/03/02, 01/08/03, 01/21/05, and 04/09/08), Driving While Suspended and Revoked, and No Proof of Insurance. He was arraigned at JP3 and committed to Sussex Correctional Institution on \$15,000.00 cash bond.

The 29-year-old male has not been charged with any crime and the investigation into that portion of the incident is on-going.

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